

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BEIRUT 13073 211720Z

44

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-10 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00

USIE-00 OPR-02 SY-05 SAB-01 OMB-01 SCS-03 SCA-01 A-01

SCCT-01 ACDA-05 /053 W

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O 211615Z OCT 75

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6734

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY ATHENS PRIORITY

USINT BAGHDAD UNN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY JIDDA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSUL STUTTGART

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON UK

COMMSIXTHFLT

CTF SIX ZERO

CTF SIX ONE

CTF SIX TWO

CTG SIX ZERO PT TWO

FOSIF ROTA SPAIN

FICEURLANT NORFOLK VA

DIA WASHDC

CIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 13073

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PAGE 02 BEIRUT 13073 211720Z

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINT, LE
SUBJECT: LAST NIGHT QUITTER THAN ANTICIPATED BUT WAIT AND SEE
OUTLOOK CONTINUES

REF: BEIRUT 13011 (20 OCT 75 1458Z)

1. SUMMARY: SNIPER AND SHELLING ACTIVITY OVERNIGHT, LESS INTENSE THAN FEARED, HAS CONTINUED INTO DAYLIGHT HOURS, MAKING MOVEMENT IN CITY HAZARDOUS, PARTICULARLY IN VICINITY OF RECENT HOTSPOTS. WITH THE AID OF HEAVY SECURITY PRECAUTIONS, ABOUT TWO-THIRDS OF PARLIAMENT CONVENED OCT 21 TO TRANSACT ORGANIZATIONAL BUSINESS AND ALLAY CONCERNS THAT CONTINUING STRIFE WOULD PROVE SUFFICIENT TO ABORT EVEN THIS MINOR POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT. POLITICAL REFORM SUBCOMMITTEE, SLATED FOR OCT 22, WILL APPARENTLY MEET WITHOUT PERSONAL PARTICIPATION OF JUMBLATT WHO IS IN DAMASCUS FOR AT LEAST TWO DAYS. ECONOMIC LIFE IN CAPITAL REMAINS AT VIRTUAL STANDSTILL; ALL AMCITS, INsofar AS WE CAN DETERMINE, REMAIN SAFE. WE HAVE NO REPEAT NO CONFIRMATION OF PRESS REPORTS THAT AN AMERICAN WAS WOUNDED.

2. BEIRUT WAS SPARED NIGHT OCT 20/21 REPLAY OF PREVIOUS EVENING'S RAUCOUS PROCEEDINGS, ALTHOUGH LEVEL OF SNIPING AND EXPLOSIONS IN CONTINUING TROUBLE SPOTS (BESHARA AL KHOURY ST.; RAS AN NABEH; BORJ: KANTARI) WAS HIGH ENOUGH TO KEEP NERVES RAW. BEIRUT RADIO CONTINUED MORNING OCT 21 TO PROCLAIM MOST ROADS UNSAFE, ALTHOUGH WE NOW BEGINNING TO SEE GRADATIONS RANGING FROM "SLIGHTLY UNSAFE" TO "COMPLETELY UNSAFE." MINOR INCIDENTS CONTINUE TODAY, CAPPED THUS FAR BY THREE ROCKETS WHICH STRUCK GENDARMERIE HEADQUARTERS (NEAR HOTEL DIEU IN ASHRAFIYEH) AT ABOUT 1220 HOURS LOCAL. PRELIMINARY REPORTS INDICATE THAT ROCKETS PASSED FROM WEST TO EAST, SUGGESTING MOSLEM AND/OR LEFTIST PROVENANCE. SOURCES SUTATE THAT NASRA OR AL HOUT ST. (ON EDGE OF RAS AN NABEH) IS SITE OF LAUCHERS. THREE GENDARMES REPORTED SERIOUSLY WOUNDED AS WELL AS ONE OR MORE CIVILIANS.

3. CITY PASSED MINOR POLITICAL TEST THIS MORNING WHEN 64 MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT, PROVIDED WITH HEAVY SECURITY, MANAGED TO GATHER AT 1100 HOURS LOCAL IN ANSWER TO AP-
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PAGE 03 BEIRUT 13073 211720Z

PEALS FROM GOL LEADERS AND PLEAS BROADCASTED OVER RADIO. PRESENT SPEAKER, KAMAL AL ASSAD, MANAGED TO WIN RE-ELECTION AS EXPECTED, GARNERING 47 VOTES (LESS THAN HALF TOTAL MEMBERSHIP OF 99 RPT 99). IN EARLY MORNING, MAY OBSERVERS EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT FAILURE OF PARLIAMENT TO OBTAIN QUORUM FOR SESSION WOULD NOT ONLY WRITE FINIS TO ROLE OF ALREADY MORIBUND PARLIAMENT BUT HAVE OMINOUS IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE FUNCTIONING OF POLITICAL SYSTEM. IN

PARTICULAR, THERE WAS CONCERN THAT "EXTREMIST" OF LEFT OR RIGHT MAKE CONCERTED EFFORT TO BLOCK PARLIAMENT AS TEST CASE AND THEREBY CAST DOUBT UPON POSSIBILITY OF CONDUCTING PARLIAMENTARY AND PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS DUE NEXT YEAR.

4. LEFTIST LUMINARY AND PSP CHIEF KAMAL JUMBLATT DEPARTED LEBANON MORNING OCT 20 FOR DAMASCUS WHERE HE IS EXPECTED TO MEET PRES HAFEZ AL-ASAD THIS AFTERNOON AND CHAIR MEETING OF ARAB FRONT FOR SUPPORT OF THE PALESTINIAN REVOLUTION THERE TOMORROW, OCT 22. JUMBLATT'S COMMITMENT TOMORROW IN DAMASCUS WILL MAKE IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR HIM TO ATTEND NEXT SESSION OF POLITICAL REFORM SUBCOMMITTEE ALSO SLATED FOR OCT 22. HE MAY, OF COURSE, DELEGATE REPRESENTATIVE WHO WOULD SERVE TO KEEP MACHINERY FROM GRINDING TO A HALT.

5. OVERNIGHT, PHALANGISTS DISCOVERED AND DEFUSED FOUR ROCKETS AIMED AT BIKFAYA (GEMAYEL'S STRONGHOLD IN MOUNT LEBANON). TWO ROCKETS WERE REPORTEDLY SET FOR DETONATION AT 0400 HOURS LOCAL AND REMAINING TWO FOR 0430 HOURS LOCAL. REMAINDER OF COUNTRY APPARENTLY REMAINS RELATIVELY QUIET, ALTHOUGH ROAD TO TRIPOLI IS CUT SOUTH OF BYBLOS.

6. EVIDENCE IS MOUNTING THAT MOST RECENT ESCALATION NIGHT OF OCT 19/20 WAS PROVOKED, FOR WHATEVER REASON, BY LEFT WITH SOME MOSLEM SUPPORT. LEFT-LEANING "AL MUHARRIR" OF OCT 21 CLAIMS "VICTORY" IN THOSE CLASHES AND MOSLEM "STREET" IS BUZZING WITH TALK OF SUCCESS IN OCCUPYING SOME PHALANGE POSITIONS IN SODECO AND BERJAWI. PHALANGIST DAILY, "AL AMAL," ASSERTS THAT 1,500 ARMED MEN PARTICIPATED IN ASSAULT ON WESTERN EDGE OF ASHRAFIYEH WHICH BEGAN NIGHT OF OCT 19. REPORTS FROM SOME EYEWITNESSES WITHIN ASHRAFIYEH AT THAT TIME INDICATE THAT PHALANGISTS THERE
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 04 BEIRUT 13073 211720Z

TOOK HEAVY FIRE INITIALLY BEFORE RESPONDING IN KIND.

7. AS CRISIS HAS CONTINUED OVER LAST SEVEN MONTHS, BEIRUTIS HAVE SHOWN LESS RESILIENCE WITH EACH PASSING FLARE-UP. DESPITE COMPARATIVELY LOW LEVEL OF LAST NIGHT'S EXCHANGES, CITY HAS EXHIBITED LITTLE READINESS TO RETURN TO STATE OF "NORMALCY, WHATEVER CONNOTATION THAT TERM HAS NOW ACQUIRED. BANKS REMAIN CLOSED AND FEW COMMERCIAL BUSINESSES HAVE OPENED. ANOTHER TANKER CARRYING GASOLINE HAS ARRIVED AT DORA, BUT, FOR REASONS OF SECURITY, GOL HAS ANNOUNCED THAT VESSEL WAS DIVERTED ELSEWHERE. AUTHORITIES HAVE REPORTED THAT COOLING SYSTEM AT MUNICIPAL MORGUE IN QARANTINA IS OUT OF OPERATION. SINCE MORGUE IS REPOSITORY FOR UNCLAIMED CORPSES, THERE IS SOME CONCERN ABOUT POSSIBILITY OF EPIDEMIC BEGINNING IN THAT AREA.

8. AS FAR AS EMBASSY CAN DETERMINE, ALL AMCITS REMAIN
SAFE. AMERICAN COMMUNITY SCHOOL REOPENED MORNING
OCT 21 RELIEVING ONE DIFFICULTY, BUT ANXIETY CONTINUES
AMONG SOME MEMBERS OF AMERICAN COMMUNITY, FED BY
SPORADIC SOUNDS OF FIGHTING AND INCIDENTS SUCH AS SHOOTOUT
ON CORNICHE IN RAOUCHE BETWEEN POLICE AND CURFEW VIOLATORS.
NEVERTHELESS, WE SEE NO RPT NO SIGNS OF PANIS OF MASS
EXODUS DEVELOPING AT THIS TIME. WE HAVE BEEN UNABLE
CONFIRM PRESS REPORTS THAT AN AMERICAN WAS WOUNDED.
GODLEY

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CASUALTIES, POLITICAL SITUATION, CIVIL DISORDERS, PROGRESS REPORTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 21 OCT 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: CunninFX
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975BEIRUT13073
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750365-0397
From: BEIRUT
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19751034/aaaabegq.tel
Line Count: 180
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 BEIRUT 13011
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: CunninFX
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 28 MAY 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <28 MAY 2003 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <06 OCT 2003 by CunninFX>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: LAST NIGHT QUITER THAN ANTICIPATED BUT WAIT AND SEE OUTLOOK CONTINUES
TAGS: PINS, PINT, PORS, LE
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006